

The Old Paths

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"Now That The Meeting Is Over ..."

Jarrod Jacobs

Now that our brother Lanny Smith has finished his gospel meeting with us, we are left with the word of God commended to us (Acts 20:32). Will we continue to "water" it (I Cor. 3:6)? Will we allow the cares of this life to "choke" out the word of God in our lives (Matt. 13:22)? Let us take a few minutes and see what we can do with the word that was preached last week.

Water The Seed

The seed that has been planted is the word of God (Lk. 8:11). Just as water is necessary for the physical life of plants, so also water is necessary for our spiritual lives. The living water Christ promised is the gospel message (Jn. 4). Therefore, we need to hear the gospel again and again in order to allow the spiritual seed to be irrigated and grow in our hearts. This is one of the reasons that we read, "*I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the growth*" (I Cor. 3:6). After the apostle Paul had planted the seed (Word of God), Apollos encouraged these brethren by teaching them more about the will of God and encouraging them to continue in the truth. To further illustrate this, remember that Christ encourages us to drink of the "*living water*" so we will never thirst (Jn. 4:10, 14, 6:35; Matt. 5:6). Either way, let us water the seed so that it can take root and grow strong!

Practice What We Have Learned

Our efforts in this gospel meeting will be in vain if we do not practice what we have learned through the teaching of brother Smith. With this in mind, Ezra is a man who stands as a good example of practicing what is learned. The Bible says, "...*Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel*" (Ezra 7:10). Notice the order in this verse: 1) Ezra set or prepared his heart for the work. 2) Ezra studied the law of the Lord. 3) Ezra did it. 4) Ezra taught Israel God's statutes. Ezra got the order right! He did not try to practice or obey something he had not learned. Nor was he disobedient to what he had learned! He first learned it, and then he did it. The description of Christ on earth is very similar to Ezra (Acts 1:1). Since we have the examples of both Ezra and Christ recorded for our learning, may we do the same! Once we know what God's word says, let us do it. Let us not be hypocrites! Now that we have heard God's word, let us practice it!

Teach Others The Truth

Continuing in this study of Ezra 7:10, notice that Ezra did not stop at simply practicing what he had learned. He also taught others the truth he had learned (Ezra 7:10). He did not try to teach what he did not know. He did not teach others to do something that he refused to do. He obeyed God, and then taught others

to do the same. In the New Testament, we see the apostle Paul doing this (I Cor. 9:27). Of course, the greatest example is that of Jesus. Notice that He not only obeyed God, but also taught the truth. Luke wrote, "*The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach*" (Acts 1:1). We have a responsibility to teach others the truth that we have learned. Again, Paul wrote, "*and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*" (II Tim. 2:2). In two of the gospel records, we read where Jesus told His disciples to "*teach all nations*" (Matt. 28:19), and "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mk. 16:15). Is there any doubt that Jesus thought teaching others was important?

Pray

Prayer is a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the Christian. It is a vital part of the armor of the Christian (Eph. 6:18). Are we using it as we should? Let us do as the letter to the Ephesians says and "*pray always*". Let us pray to God for an open door to spread the truth we have learned this last week (II Thess. 3:1). Pray that we might take the things we have learned and apply them to our lives, so that we are not like the Hebrews who had learned, but needed to be taught again (Heb. 5:12-14). Pray for opportunities to speak with others about the truth we learned this week so we can bring more lost people to Christ. Let us spend time in prayer thanking God for His word, and that it is understandable to men (Eph. 3:4). Put simply, let us "*pray without ceasing*" (I Thess. 5:17).

Now that the meeting is over,
WHAT WILL YOU DO???

Preaching ~ What Is It?

J.W. McGarvey

(From: *The Apostolic Times*, Lexington, KY, December 3, 1874)

A great many preachers have an entire misconception of their calling, and many more have no very definite conception as to what preaching really is. A writer in the *New York Observer* recently expressed his conception of it in the following words:

"But, there is no sphere of life, no facts, no principles, no rights of men, which are not proper subjects of pulpit notice, and the scope of the preacher is absolutely unbounded, his sphere is as wide as earth and heaven. The kingdoms of this world, and the Kingdom of the Redeemer are his to treat and to expound; the realm of the mind, and the achievements of history and science, are all his."

This is an extreme view, but it is the one toward which the current of public opinion has been rapidly drifting for the last ten or fifteen years. It is well to pause and consider whether this tendency is in the right direction.

Paul's conception of preaching was quite different. When preaching to sinners he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified (I Cor. 2:2). Notice, he determined not merely to preach nothing else, but to know nothing else; that is, so far as men discovered what he knew by hearing his discourses he would appear to know nothing else. What he knew of science, of profane history, of everything not directly tributary to his one theme, this he allowed no place in his sermons.

There could scarcely be a greater contrast than exists between his conception of preaching, and that expressed in the extract given above.

To young, or comparatively inexperienced disciples, Paul gave milk — the pure milk of the word. He confined himself to imparting elementary instruction in the duties and privileges of the Christian life. To the "perfect," the disciples possessed of matured knowledge and experience, he spoke "wisdom," yet not the wisdom of this world, not the wisdom of human philosophy or science. In no part of his ministration, whether preaching to sinners or teaching the saints, did he have use for science or philosophy. "But," says he, "*we speak the wisdom of God*" - the knowledge which God alone had imparted (I Cor. 2:6-7).

According to the divine ideal, then, preaching is limited in its subject matter to the subjects on which God has seen fit to speak. It is also limited in regard to the manner in which these subjects are to be treated.

Many persons imagine that a sermon may be complete if it merely elucidates its subject; if it merely imparts instruction. But there is not a sermon nor an epistle

in the New Testament which contents itself with this. Instruction is never aimed at as an end, but is always a change for the better in the life of the hearer. It is the reformation of the sinner and the more complete sanctification of the righteous. A sermon which has not this aim, is misdirected - it is a blank cartridge fired off into the air.

What is a sermon, then, but a discourse whose subject matter is derived from the word of God, and whose purpose is to effect some specific change for the better in those who hear it.

If you would decide whether your so-called sermons are real sermons, or mere lectures, or mere harangues, apply to them the test here indicated. Ask yourself, what specific change of life for the better do I intend to effect in my hearers by this discourse? If none, then reconstruct the discourse with a view to some such effect; and if you cannot thus reconstruct it, throw it away. Never go into the pulpit with a speech in your hand which is not a real sermon.

Editor's Note:

Brother McGarvey wrote this over 100 years ago, but the study is as valid and necessary as ever! Discussions concerning Bible preaching continue to this day. Therefore, let us take this study to heart and respect what the Bible describes as true Bible preaching!

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